

## The Ascension.

BY CECIL FRANCIS ELAXANDER.

The golden gates are lifted high,  
The doors are open wide,  
The King of glory is gone in  
Unto His Father's side.  
Thou art gone up before us, Lord,  
To make for us a place,  
That we may be where now Thou art,  
And look upon God's face.  
And ever on our earthly path  
A glean of glory lies,  
A light still breaks behind the cloud  
That veiled Thee from our eyes.  
Lift up our hearts, lift up our minds,  
Let Thy dear grace be given;  
That while we wander here below  
Our treasure rests in heaven.  
That where Thou art at God's right hand,  
Our hope, our love may be;  
Dwell Thou in us, that we may dwell  
Forevermore with Thee.

—THE MISSIONARY.

## A Lecture by C. Shank on Reformation, Meaning and Duration.

Reformation is a phrase variously understood and believed. Many believe it to be synonymous with regeneration, restitution and conversion. Webster, however, makes some difference; he defines reformation,—to correct, amendment, to form anew. Restitution,—act of restoring, recovery, conversion, a turning, change to another form or state. Regeneration,—reproduction, to renew as to affection, the new birth, etc. By this we can see the difference; though small, yet there is a difference, and this should not be overlooked, nor should we lightly pass over the subject as of little importance as the word reformation is found but once in the sacred volume, Heb. 9:10. "Which stood only in meats and drinks and divers washings and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation." Here then it has reference to a time yet in the future to them who had to observe these carnal ordinances, and no doubt were those who lived under the ceremonial law and worshipped according to its prescribed order, which, however, at the time of the apostle's writings and teaching, had become obsolete, and were now only an obstacle, a hindrance to the observance of the but recently introduced and forever established order. With this fact before him the apostle labored to impress the Hebrews that all the law in its figurative narrative contained was now in the era of the foretold reformation fulfilled. All that the law pointed to, all that the Lord had made known to the fathers in time past, by the prophets, was now already orally declared by Him who had been appointed for this purpose before the foundation of the world. To this era of reformation that we are considering, all the prediction and promises made to men are unerringly pointing. The woman's seed to bruise the serpent's head, that man can again enter the gate of Paradise and partake of the Tree of Life and live forever, was made possible. The blessings promised to Abraham, that in him and his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed, were now verified, and so were the words of the patriarch Jacob, when on his death-bed he declared that the sceptre should not depart from Judea, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come, and to him shall the gathering of the people be. Also Moses, before his departure, told the children of Israel that "a prophet like unto him the Lord would raise up unto them. Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you." And so we might go among the prophets and kings and find evidences in great number that the Lord had his time appointed in which he would make known his determinate counsel unto men. But as to the precise time and date of the beginning of this reformation, this was for an all-wise purpose withheld from those even who looked for it and were prepared to receive it. And why this was so, may yet be a mystery to all. It could not have been that God waited until his people were schooled and educated in the matter and had learned faith in all the prophetic declarations, for at the time it made its appearance, almost the whole Jewish nation was sunk so deep in unbelief and other kindred corrupt-

ing influences that they would not listen to anything contrary to the corrupt doctrine that was then taught by the doctors of the great Sanhedrim and the elders and rulers of the synagogue. Their entire worship was moulded after the traditional teachings of the elders and their sectarian principles of adherence did keep them so enveloped in darkness that they did not see the light when it was introduced among them. Had they kept the law as it was delivered to their fathers by Moses, or had they believed the writings of the prophets which were read to them every Sabbath, they would not have missed the signs that appeared in advance of the greatest luminary the world ever beheld. But as already alluded, their blind unbelief would not admit it. They held their self-made faith in greater esteem and their practical religious performance in greater reverence than any of the commandments given to them by heaven's appointment.

By this we may readily perceive that God did not wait for the readiness of the children of Israel to receive his promised blessings by mankind, for his promises were not alone to the Jews, or to the descendants of faithful Abraham, but all nations of the earth should be recipients of his unbounding grace. Although he had as yet revealed these hidden things but to few, that the fulfillment of this gracious era was about to be ushered in, the greatest multitude still lived without thinking that deliverance from death was near at hand. The heavenly messages sent to them from time to time had not the effect to cause them to look in the right direction, or for such a deliverance as they expected. They knew they were subjected to an earthly power, and had not the remotest idea that this deliverance would be of an entire different nature. They knew that God had borne with them through three times fourteen generations, and reclaimed them often from the hands of their enemies and total destruction, and no doubt expected to be repeated in a time when their own power would not be sufficient. Hence we see the great opposition and contradiction of all that was calculated to be for their eternal well being. Notwithstanding their unprepared condition, their ungodliness, their unbelief and unrighteousness and boasting, of being God's chosen people, God, according to his own decreed purpose, ushered in this reformation, not by the help and assistance of the educated scribes, nor by the counsel of the lawyers and doctors, nor by the pretended teachings of the Pharisees, but when his own time did arrive. He manifested his power to a few chosen among his people, poor in this world's good, and unlearned, as it were, in wisdom of the high and great, in earthly standing. For among the lowly he had always chosen those who testified of his goodness and all his other divine attributes, and who would not run after gods and worship those that were not gods. These were his witnesses on earth and were those of whom the apostle said that "God had not left himself without a witness." These were always ready and willing to receive messages and without gain-saying, observe them.

The first definite message the world received of the beginning of this reformation was at the birth of him of whom it is said that "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest and shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." And this message includes the great power and love of a gracious Father, on the contemplation of which every soul should sink in humble adoration before the throne of His Majesty on high and give sincere thanks and praises unto him who has thus condescended to come down into a sinful and rebellious world to bless it with light, life and happiness unspeakable to tell or pen to describe, but only for angel and seraphic tongues to utter and declare. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and good-will toward men. These are no prophetic predictions, no symbolical declaration nor figurative sayings, for the meaning was all plainly understood by the unlearned shepherds, and more, they were, and are still the summary of doctrine of the new covenant that God had decreed to make with all who would believe and obey the obligation required for the advancement of the

peaceable state on earth as it had been declared by the heavenly host. Nothing of such great and weighty matter to mankind was ever so concisely delivered as this much needed and welcome message. In it was contained the close relationship between the Creator and the creature, at the time before man had transgressed and become separated, through sin, from communion with a pure and holy God. This relationship, God in his merciful nature and disposition purposed to renew and re-establish. He had not to consult the great and the learned as to the time and season, nor the state of preparation the people were in for its reception, for he knew all, and had from time to time made known that such an event would surely come, when the time of all he had spoken by his prophets was at hand and he himself would come down and lead the reform. In the declaration of the angel who told the shepherds of the birth of a Savior is a verification of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah of more than 700 years before it actually came to pass. For God so caused this marvelous event portrayed. Hence the prophet spoke as if he were present on the pasture fields or sheep folds near Bethlehem. It says, Isaiah 9:6. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called wonderful counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace." Now when the child, the Son is pronounced and declared so highly, the Father must be the same, his and our all, both in this life and that, that never ends. To this end and for this purpose to reveal himself God has inaugurated this era of reformation.

With these desultory remarks, we come to the epoch when the change in worship belonging to the covenants must be effected. In the new it was to be spiritual. The ordinances in the old were carnal, so the apostle says, and consequently could not answer any longer. The old were designed for a time. Those of the new to be for all time to come, perpetual, everlasting, and as their Author without variableness nor shadow of turning. Thus we behold that the entire order of worship must be revised and revolutionized. And whereas there was to be a change in the performance of the ordinances, there necessarily must be a change in the ministry. To the tribe of Levi was heretofore these duties allotted, and no other had a legal right to perform any service belonging to this tribe that the Lord had selected himself. This tribal right was also to be abolished with the close and doing away of the first covenant and its carnal ordinances, as in the second or new covenant, all men were to be privileged to make their own offerings and become their own priests in the new order of worship at the introduction of this reformation. This, however, was all to be done peaceably and without violence, according to the nature and disposition of the Prince of Peace; hence we notice in the last of the first, and the first minister of the new covenant, a descendent of Levi, a son of a priest was chosen to introduce this important and needful change. He did not make his first appearance in the populous metropolis of Judea, nor in the temple of the great city, the resort of the high learned of worldly wisdom. No, it was in the wilderness of Judea near the river of Jordan, where John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance as the foundation of the doctrine of the new covenant and kingdom of God. And it was also here where he introduced the chief teacher whom Heaven had appointed as the author and promulgator of the ordinances to be observed during the continued era or time of this reformation. For we find him on various occasions debase himself and exalt the authority and virtues of his divine Master to be vastly above his own. He confessed himself unworthy to unloose the latches of the shoes of him whom they knew not, although already among them, and on all occasions gave testimony that Christ was the long promised deliverer and Saviour of the world. From whence, we might ask, had this humble servant of God such knowledge of the greatness of Him who was soon to appear on the stage of action and reveal the things which were hidden from men since the foundation of the world. This, John the Baptist knew by inspiration and the signs given him in doing the function of his office. By